

National Observances

March

American Red Cross Month
National Nutrition Month
National Women's History Month
National Social Work Month

Week of March 2-8

National Sleep Awareness Week

Week of March 9-14

National Agriculture Week

Week of March 17-21

Flood Safety Awareness Week

Week of March 24-28

National LGBT Health Awareness Week

What is the EAP?

The Employee Assistance Program (EAP) is a **FREE** and **CONFIDENTIAL** service that can assist you and your eligible family members with **ANY** personal concern, large or small.

Employees and family members can call Cascade 24 hours a day, seven days a week. We can help!

Call Cascade to schedule an in-person appointment or get the resources you need. For more information, please call us at:

800.433.2320

www.cascadecenters.com



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Living a Life in Balance

Do you feel like your life is too complicated? Are you often torn between your work and home responsibilities?

"If so, you're not alone, and you don't have to despair," says Odette Pollar, president of Smart Ways to Work, a personal productivity firm in Oakland, Calif., and author of *Take Back Your Life*. "You can gain peace and relief by making a conscious effort to reduce the complexities in your life and achieve balance."

Given all you have to do, it's easy to lose sight of what's probably your ultimate goal: to enjoy your life as you follow through on your personal and professional responsibilities in satisfying ways.

Here are Ms. Pollar's suggestions for successfully balancing your time and life.

Learn to streamline

Speeding up and trying to force more and more into the same blocks of time isn't the best way to have more time in your life. According to Ms. Pollar, the best way to "get it all done" is to have fewer things to do by consciously streamlining your ongoing responsibilities.

Being selective about your choices and how you spend your time is important. And it's vital to keep your perspective and establish realistic expectations for yourself.

"Regaining balance starts with the awareness that something is out of kilter, that you have too much going on," she says. "From there you can identify what you want less of in your life."

Ask yourself questions

You can achieve balance by setting your priorities and creating a life around them. This is a long-term process and requires thought and insight.

As a way to get started, take some time to list three to five answers to these questions:

- What physical needs are important to you and why?

- What emotional needs are important to you and why?
- What mental needs must be filled to make you content?
- What causes the sense of frustration or depression you may feel?
- What does success -- both personal and professional -- mean to you?

Your answers will provide information you can use to make changes in your life.

Determine what you want

Before making any big changes, consider the results you want to achieve. This will give you a starting point from which to choose a direction and set goals.

- For example, you might want to:
- Enjoy work and have enough energy left at the end of the day to enjoy your home life.
- Cultivate a better relationship with your children, partner, friends and extended family.
- Do more things you'd like to do and feel more content.

By reacquainting yourself with your needs, desires and feelings, you can make a plan with a systematic approach for achieving your goals.

Respect the process

Achieving balance is an ongoing process that requires your regular attention. As you move forward, talk with others about how they have achieved balance in their lives and share your successes.

As you continue on your road to a more satisfying life, remember the following:

- Keep your job and your life in perspective. Success at the expense of relaxation and enjoyment is not success.

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- Take yourself less seriously. Learn to see and appreciate the lighter side of life.
- Learn to say "no." Be firm without apology or guilt.

"It's easier to balance a simpler life," says Ms. Pollar. "For a life worth living, eliminate the unimportant, whether it be relationships, tasks, responsibilities, possessions or beliefs."

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Common, Self-Generated Time Wasters

- **Not Planning Ahead:** When we don't plan out goals or objectives, we can be overwhelmed by the magnitude of the task in front of us. In addition, when we start off on a project before planning, we can easily encounter roadblocks that we could've seen had we thought ahead. Create a list of priorities on a daily, weekly, and monthly basis. Keep it somewhere you can routinely see.
- **Being Disorganized:** You create more work for yourself when you don't know where things are. Ask yourself if you can easily find work-related items; if not, rearrange your workspace so you can work more efficiently. Try to keep separate areas for works in progress and accomplished projects. This way you can better prioritize your tasks.
- **Procrastinating:** We can waste a lot of time thinking about and putting off things that need to get done. Oftentimes, a task seems so overwhelming, that we don't know where to start. When this happens, break a big project into a series of smaller tasks, and give yourself a deadline. Reward yourself when you accomplish the goal. You can have other people check your progress. Ask a co-worker to check in on you regarding tasks you hate to do. Try to do undesirable tasks early in the day so you don't spend big portions of your day worrying about annoying tasks that you have to get to later on.

Finding and Keeping Friends

Having a friend is one of the joys of life. Research has found that children in positive friendships are less prone to bullying. Adult friendships reduce stress and anxiety and provide courage and support. Friendships are a buffer against loneliness and depression for older adults.

Likewise, many studies have found strong friendships reduce the risk for disease by lowering blood pressure, heart rate and cholesterol. The Nurses' Health Study from Harvard Medical School found the more friends women had, the less likely they were to develop physical impairments as they aged. The results were so significant the researchers concluded that not having close friends was as detrimental to health as smoking or being overweight.

The following suggestions can help you make and keep a friend and live a more harmonious life.

Finding new friends

- Be a people person. Smile and project a positive attitude to be more approachable. Ask questions and take an active interest in other people. Remember names and personal details so you can strike up a conversation when you meet again.
- Find new friends through activities you enjoy. If you like to draw, join an art club. If you like to bike, get involved with a cycling group that tours together. Whatever your interests, getting together with others who share your interests puts you in a good position to make new friends.
- Join a support group. Support groups are a great way to meet people who have similar health issues or life challenges.
- Attend community activities, such as sporting events, plays, concerts, art shows, poetry readings, book signings, civic groups, special interest groups and political meetings. Take a course or join a church. Let yourself be seen and known in the community.
- Volunteer. Strong connections often are formed when people work together on projects or issues that benefit others. Consider helping at a soup kitchen, reading to children in day care, visiting people in nursing homes or serving on a social action committee.

- Make friends of acquaintances. To do so, work on improving your relationships with people already in your life by doing such things as inviting them to your home for a meal, getting together to watch a video or giving them support when they're struggling with a problem.
- Think quality, not quantity. Having a small number of close friends improves your emotional well-being more than having a roomful of casual acquaintances.

Being a friend

- Be a good listener. Let the other person know you're paying close attention through eye contact, body language and occasional brief comments like: "I knew you could do it." "That sounds like fun." "I bet you wish it had happened some other way." Avoid thinking about your response while the person is talking. If a person is sharing something personal, give that your full attention. Don't share an "I can top that" story.
- Keep personal information confidential. As you feel more comfortable with the other person, you'll find you talk more and share more personal information. Have a mutual understanding that anything personal the two of you discuss will not be mentioned to anyone else.
- Have a good time. Spend most of your time with your friends doing fun, interesting activities. Sometimes friendships get bogged down if all you do is talk about each other's problems. Go to a movie, take a walk, play ball, watch a sports event, cook a meal -- whatever would be fun for both of you. Take turns suggesting and initiating these activities.
- Stay in touch. Maintain regular contact with your friends, even when things are going well. Give them a call or send them a note or e-mail. Regular contact is the best way to ensure your friendships remain strong.

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